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Arab States - Israel: [Jordan is continuing its maneuvers to avoid the stationing of other Arab forces on its territory.]

[Another meeting of the Arab Defense Council has been scheduled for 14 February to discuss the matter again in the light of Jordan's recent insistence that other related resolutions by the council--including reinforcement of Arab forces on other fronts with Israel--be implemented along with the one regarding deployment of Iraqi and Saudi forces in Jordan. According to the defense council's decision of 10 December, Iraqi and Saudi troops were to be stationed in west Jordan by mid-February.]

[Jordan also has requested an "urgent" Arab summit meeting to discuss the risk of war with Israel involved in these Arab military plans. Jordan's request states that it is totally unrealistic to assume that any effective Arab military alliance can be forged against Israel until present political antagonisms within the Arab world are resolved.]

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[Brief clashes along the central and southern sectors of the Israeli-Syrian border during the past few days thus far have not resulted in any fatalities, normally the signal for more serious trouble. An Israeli spokesman earlier had reported that land mines had been discovered on two successive days in the northern part of the frontier.]

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Congo (Kinshasa) - Belgium: [President Mobutu is going ahead with his take-over of Union Miniere's Congolese holdings despite mounting evidence that the consequences for the Congo's finances could be disastrous.]

[On 1 January, Mobutu's government announced the establishment of a new Congolese company to take over Union Miniere's activities in the Congo. Unlike the provisional administrative council which Mobutu set up on 23 December, a majority of the new company's directors will be Congolese, and the Congolese Government will hold 60 percent of its stock. On 15 January, unless Union Miniere pays the \$150 million or more that Mobutu says it owes the Congo, the extensive Congolese interests of the related Societe Generale holding company reportedly will be seized as well.]

[The Congolese seem to have overestimated drastically Union Miniere's eagerness to stay on in the Congo. Instead the company allegedly has decided that it would be better to get out of the copper-mining business than to yield to Mobutu's central demand--the transfer of the company's headquarters to Kinshasa. Under present circumstances the company appears unwilling even to market the Congo's mineral production, and it may take legal action to attach any copper the new company does export. Even if there is no litigation, the flow of foreign exchange to Kinshasa would be further disrupted while new marketing arrangements were worked out. Payments of foreign exchange have already been stopped by Union Miniere for more than a week.]

[Mobutu's political position does not appear to be jeopardized for the time being by these moves. Over the longer term, however, the economic disruption is almost certain to produce social and political unrest which Mobutu will have trouble controlling.]

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France: De Gaulle's two New Year's statements on Vietnam further underline the independent role he envisions for France in world affairs.

His message to the nation and his speech to the diplomatic corps castigate the US for continuing the war, but propose no solution other than the unilateral withdrawal of American forces. The tone of his criticism was sharper than his utterances at Phnom Penh in early September and in his late October press conference, when he made similar demands. This suggests a more forceful effort to divorce France from any identification with the US in the eyes of the world.

There is a hint of a shift in emphasis in his current position on Vietnam. In his earlier statements, he denied any intention of proposing mediation because he believed peace was impossible then. While he still does not put himself forward as a mediator, the strong insistence he places on American withdrawal suggests that he may feel his position is receiving wider support. In this context, he is re-emphasizing his claim to a part for France in any postwar settlement. [redacted]

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Argentina: President Onganía's year-end speech and his appointment of two new cabinet ministers indicate that the government plans to continue its basic policies while seeking a more dynamic image.

Onganía reiterated in his address on 30 December the general economic, political, and social policies often voiced in the past, while denying that he favored a corporate state or was prejudiced against labor. The President expressed his determination to keep the military out of direct involvement in government.

The new economics minister, Adelbert Krieger Vasena, is a highly respected economist, and he had been mentioned in recent months as a possible replacement for the indecisive Jorge Salimei. Guillermo Borda, the new interior minister, was a jurist both during and after the Peron era and a Supreme Court justice in the Onganía government. He should help dispel the right-wing image created by his predecessor, Enrique Martínez Paz, an admirer of Franco-style fascism.

It seems likely that the new ministers will move swiftly to resolve the controversy that has been brewing lately over labor reform and the delayed 1967 budget.

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*Cuba: Cuban Prime Minister Fidel Castro's traditional 2 January speech was a routine, comparatively low-key address which gave no indications of any changes in policy.

High points in the speech were a sharp attack on the US "economic blockade" and a vaguely worded suggestion that other members of the Cuban Communist Party Central Committee should assume a greater share in party leadership. In conclusion, Castro continued his tradition of attaching a slogan to the new year naming 1967 the "year of heroic Vietnam."

Despite his comments on sharing party leadership, there is no reason to believe that Castro plans to reduce his own role in running the country.

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NOTE

Nigeria: [Eastern military governor Ojukwu now is more disposed to meet with Supreme Commander Gowon and the other regional governors, and preparations are well advanced for an early get-together in Ghana. However, this latest attempt to arrange a meeting may already have been undermined by Ojukwu's public criticism of Gowon on 31 December. In any event, no early reconciliation of widely divergent views on Nigeria's future structure is in sight, although a restoration of formal dialogue among the disputants would at least ease current high tensions.]

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